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Enduring Hope?: A Study of Looping in Law School

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Enduring Hope? A Study of Looping in Law School

Mary-Beth Moylan and Stephanie Thompson†*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Looping is a teaching technique used primarily in elementary education. The approach requires a teacher to “loop” with a class through more than one grade level. Among other goals, the process of looping aims to provide continuity of educational instruction, depth of understanding between teacher and student, and incentive for working out conflicts if they arise. All these laudable educational goals, which can be summarized as strengthening teacher-student relationships and enhancing learning, are as applicable to law schools as they are to elementary schools. So, why shouldn’t looping work in the law school context, as well?

This essay explores the history and benefits of looping and discusses our idea that it could have a place in legal skills education. We describe our law school’s two-year required skills program and the study that we are undertaking to determine if law students thrive and find increased measures of hope from remaining with the same professor and classmates through two years of required skills instruction.

While our study will take two years to complete and report on, we recorded preliminary sentiments of students involved in the Global Lawyering Skills program at University of the Pacific, McGeorge School of Law. In this essay, we share our hypothesis and predictions about the study, and we plan to follow up with a detailed assessment of the responses we receive from students and faculty involved in our looping experiment.

II. STABILITY IN TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS

Engendering hope, cultivating enthusiasm, and teaching the skills that our students will need to be competent lawyers are goals of most law school teachers. Key ingredients to achieving these objectives are: (1) knowing our students and (2) facilitating their journey. It is difficult to guide students through the law school path and steer them out into the world of lawyers without knowing them well. In this way, the second objective cannot be easily achieved without the first. The end result we hope to achieve—hopeful, enthusiastic, and skilled students—is built through the strong teacher-student relationship that we develop as we learn about our students and guide them to success.

In the Martin and Rand article, *The Future's So Bright, I Gotta Wear Shades: Law School Through the Lens of Hope*, the authors identify endpoints for engendering hope as the ability to create strategies to reach a goal and the motivational component to propel people along their imagined route to their goals.¹ Martin and Rand's recipe for "Engendering Hope" in law students include:

1. Helping students formulate learning rather than performance goals;²
2. Helping students formulate concrete rather than abstract goals;³
3. Helping students formulate approach rather than avoidance goals;⁴
4. Increasing law student autonomy;⁵
5. Modeling the learning process;⁶
6. Helping students to understand grading as feedback;⁷
and
7. Modeling a "can-do" attitude.⁸

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1. Allison D. Martin & Kevin L. Rand, *The Future's So Bright, I Gotta Wear Shades: Law School Through the Lens of Hope*, 48 DUQ. L. REV. 203, 218 (2010).

2. *Id.* at 218.

3. *Id.*

4. *Id.*

5. *Id.*

6. Martin & Rand, *supra* note 1, at 218.

7. *Id.*

8. *Id.*

Similarly, Emily Zimmerman recently authored an article that focuses on cultivating law student enthusiasm.⁹ She defines enthusiasm as “law student interest for law study and vitality associated with law study.”¹⁰ “‘Interest’ captures law students’ commitment to study. ‘Vitality’ captures law students’ subjective feelings of energy regarding law study.”¹¹ Professor Zimmerman first explains the four-phase level of interest development that students traverse.¹² She then discusses vitality as being increased in situations where a student feels autonomous and free from evaluation.¹³ Professor Zimmerman concludes that cultivating enthusiasm should be a goal of professors, and achievement of that goal means giving different types of formative assessments depending on the student’s interest and vitality levels.¹⁴

Many of the recent writings on law student performance and assessments have sprung from the Carnegie Foundation’s recent report on the state of law school education.¹⁵ In *Educating Lawyers* (the *Carnegie Report*), the authors explain that law schools should be focusing on three apprenticeships (cognitive, practical, and professional identity (or ethical-social)), instead of just the cognitive and intellectual one, which historically has been the focus of most doctrinal courses.¹⁶ The *Carnegie Report* very favorably discusses how the apprenticeships connect up in the legal writing world. The report also indicates that all three apprenticeships recognize that “students must perform complex skills in order to gain expertise.”¹⁷ But “students do not get better through practice alone. If their performance is to improve, they need practice accompanied by informative feedback and reflection on their own performance.”¹⁸

Taken together, the *Carnegie Report*, Professor Zimmerman, and Professors Martin and Rand, can be read as a call for a more rich and complex educational process that requires more reflection about teaching and assessing from the professors, and more reflec-

9. Emily Zimmerman, *An Interdisciplinary Framework for Understanding and Cultivating Law Student Enthusiasm*, 58 DEPAUL L. REV. 851 (2009).

10. *Id.* at 854.

11. *Id.* at 857.

12. *Id.* at 859-68.

13. *Id.* at 868-72.

14. Zimmerman, *supra* note 9, at 916.

15. See WILLIAM SULLIVAN ET AL., *EDUCATING LAWYERS: PREPARATION FOR THE PROFESSION OF LAW* (2007).

16. *Id.* at 79.

17. *Id.* at 145.

18. *Id.* at 145-46.

tion about learning and performing from the students. In order to implement this richer educational program, presumably, a teacher must have a very good read on where her students have been and who they are. Building the inter-personal relationships between students and the faculty who teach them is an important step in achieving any of the goals promoted by Sullivan, Zimmerman, Martin and Rand, and others.

For example, in order to engender hope, a professor who has a strong and stable relationship with his students will be in a better position to complete the recipe for hope, including formulating goals, modeling learning, and assessing the level of autonomy they are ready to experience. Similarly, Professor Zimmerman's four-phase level of interest development is only helpful in cultivating enthusiasm if the professor has an idea of which phase her students are in. Ideally, vitality can also be achieved by a relationship in which the teacher-student relationship is sufficiently strong to allow for autonomous work and a sense of knowing what is expected.

Strong and stable teacher-student relationships are one of the keys to fulfilling the call of the *Carnegie Report*. Practical and professional identity apprenticeships require performing complex skills, receiving meaningful feedback, and reflecting on the process. Where a long-term and stable mentor provides the opportunity for autonomous work and provides individualized feedback, the multi-dimensional education that *Educating Lawyers* calls for will be more likely achieved.

III. HISTORY AND OBJECTIVES OF LOOPING IN ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

Looping is a fairly straightforward concept that simply means that a teacher remains with a class of students through a period of two or more years.¹⁹ The idea of looping was preceded by and is related to multi-age groupings that were used in one-room school-houses in colonial America.²⁰ The approach has been used in

19. NORTHEAST AND ISLANDS REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL LABORATORY AT BROWN UNIVERSITY, LOOPING: SUPPORTING STUDENT LEARNING THROUGH LONG-TERM RELATIONSHIPS 3 (1997), available at <http://www.alliance.brown.edu/pubs/ic/looping/looping.pdf> [hereinafter LOOPING].

20. *Id.* at 12. (Think Laura Ingalls Wilder and Anne of Green Gables).

Germany and Japan for many years.²¹ The concept has also been referred to as “continuous learning” or “multi-year grouping.”²²

In 1919, Rudolf Steiner introduced looping from first to eighth grade when he was retained to start an educational program for cigarette factory workers’ children in the Waldorf-Astoria cigarette company in Stuttgart, Germany.²³ Coming on the heels of World War I, his educational philosophy, which is still practiced today as Waldorf education, sought to educate the whole child and bring a new type of adult thinker to the world.²⁴ Steiner believed that in order to teach morals, peace, and creativity for the next generation, there needed to be a solid base for children as they passed through the stages of elementary education.²⁵ Part of the stability necessary to instill love of learning and complete maturation of the child would come from having the same guide through their elementary education.²⁶

Looping is still used in Waldorf classrooms around the world.²⁷ Just over ten years ago, an article by Todd Oppenheimer in *The Atlantic Monthly* briefly discussed the concept of looping and noted that educators in other methods were starting to look to the concept of looping more.²⁸

Oppenheimer spoke with a number of Waldorf teachers in the course of his in-depth study of the educational philosophy and noted that there are considerable benefits to looping:

One of the unusual aspects of Waldorf education is a system called looping, whereby a homeroom teacher stays with a class for more than a year—in Waldorf’s case, from first through eighth grade. The practice has an intriguing combination of pros and cons, and is attracting growing attention in other education circles both private and public.

The purpose of this is to build solid, long-term relationships and to teach students how to do that themselves. “If you get in an argument with someone, you have to work it out,” says

21. Joan Gaustad, *Implementing Looping*, ERIC DIGEST, Dec. 1998, available at <http://eric.uoregon.edu/pdf/digests/digest123.pdf>.

22. LOOPING, *supra* note 19, at 3.

23. Todd Oppenheimer, *Schooling the Imagination*, THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY, Sept. 1999, at 73.

24. *Id.*

25. *Id.* at 73.

26. *Id.* at 82-83.

27. *Id.* at 72, 82-83.

28. Oppenheimer, *supra* note 23, at 82.

Karen Rivers, a Waldorf educator and consultant in California. For students, looping offers a base of support.²⁹

He also noted, however, that looping has some downsides.³⁰ Chiefly, the students' exposure is limited to the strengths of one particular teacher.³¹ In Waldorf education, specialty teachers fill some of the holes, but nonetheless, students are exposed to only a single main lesson teacher for eight years of elementary education.³² As discussed in the Oppenheimer article:

The downside of looping, however, is substantial. Although the task of preparing new lessons each day keeps material fresh for the teachers and students, it also restricts the teacher's ability to perfect given lessons with repetition. And conflict between teachers and students isn't always overcome; even when it is, tension can remain. "Our teacher was great," Ben Klocek, the recent Sacramento senior, told me. "But it was way too much. By the eighth grade you're completely sick of each other." Perhaps most important, the holes in a given instructor's teaching aren't always readily filled later. Scott Embrey-Stine, a Waldorf high school teacher in Sacramento, has spent most of his career in public schools, and has been impressed by the rare skills that Waldorf develops in students. Still, after two years at Waldorf, he says, he could identify the strengths and weaknesses in the lower-school teachers by the distinct character of each class. "You see the imprint of the class teacher," he says.³³

Some Waldorf-inspired high schools are now attempting to integrate the looping concept by having the home-room teacher remain the same throughout the high school years.³⁴ The idea is to ensure that someone is watching closely the growth and maturation

29. *Id.*

30. *Id.* at 83.

31. *Id.*

32. *See id.*

33. Oppenheimer, *supra* note 23, at 83. In my own experience with my children looping with Waldorf teachers, the downsides and the upsides have played out. First, it doesn't always work because of economics or other life choices that teachers or students make. Second, sometimes it can be wonderful and sometimes not. There is an incentive to work out problems with the teacher early and often. And there is no question that the teacher has an opportunity to know the child better and tends to invest more time to know the child better.

34. *See id.*

tion of the student, and not allowing students to fall through the cracks.³⁵

Non-Waldorf schools have also implemented looping, although usually for loops shorter than eight years.³⁶ The Northeast and Islands Regional Educational Laboratory at Brown University put out a publication on looping about a decade ago that listed the following academic benefits to looping:

1. "Teachers gain extra teaching time—'getting-to-know-you time' unnecessary in the second year";³⁷
2. "Teacher knowledge about a child's intellectual strengths and weaknesses increases in a way that is impossible to achieve in a single year";³⁸
3. "Long-term teacher/student relationships improve . . . student performance"³⁹ and "job satisfaction for teachers";⁴⁰ and
4. "Multi-year teaching offers . . . possibilities for summertime learning."⁴¹

The same publication listed some of the social benefits of looping:

1. "[R]educ[ed] [student] apprehension about new school year";⁴²
2. "[B]enefits from time spent on developing social skills and cooperative group strategies" over two or more years;⁴³
3. Students get to know one another better and are better at resolving conflicts and being team members;⁴⁴
4. "Long term relationships result in emotional and intellectual climate that encourages thinking, risk taking, and involvement";⁴⁵

35. See *id.* at 72, 83.

36. See Gaustad, *supra* note 21.

37. LOOPING, *supra* note 19, at 6.

38. *Id.*

39. *Id.* at 6 (quotations omitted).

40. *Id.* at 7 (quotations omitted).

41. *Id.*

42. LOOPING, *supra* note 19, at 7 (citations omitted).

43. *Id.* at 7 (citations omitted).

44. *Id.* at 8 (citations omitted).

45. *Id.* (citations omitted).

5. "English language learners adjust more easily to their new school" and develop confidence more quickly;⁴⁶ and
6. "Encourages a stronger sense of community among teachers and students" (and families in the elementary education context).⁴⁷

Citing the incentive that looping gives teachers to work out their problems with students early on, the publication, nonetheless, acknowledges that in rare cases there may be a conflict that cannot be resolved, and taking a student out of a class for the second year might be the best option.⁴⁸

IV. CAN LOOPING BENEFIT LAW STUDENTS?

Presumably, law students as much as elementary students can benefit from the academic and social benefits of looping. Of the listed benefits for elementary students, the following are relevant to the educational and psychological experience for law students:

1. The teacher gains extra time to teach;
2. The teacher knows students' intellectual strengths and weaknesses better;
3. Long term relationships improve student performance and teacher satisfaction;
4. Reduction of student apprehension;
5. Students improve abilities to resolve conflicts and work as a team; and
6. Long-term relationships encourage thinking, risk taking, and involvement.⁴⁹

These benefits are particularly relevant to the required legal research, writing, and skills courses offered at most law schools. While all classes can benefit from a teacher having more time to teach, in a skills course, if the professor already knows the strengths and weaknesses of her students, the instruction can be

46. *Id.* (citations omitted).

47. LOOPING, *supra* note 19, at 8 (citations omitted).

48. *Id.* at 9-10.

49. See Daniel L. Burke, *Looping: Adding Time, Strengthening Relationships*, ERIC DIGEST, Dec. 1997, available at, http://www.eric.ed.gov:80/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content_storage_01/0000019b/80/15/12/57.pdf; Daniel L. Burke, *Multi-Year Teacher/Student Relationships Are A Long-Overdue Arrangement*, PHI DELTA KAPPAN, Jan. 1996, at 360-361.

focused on more advanced learning without having to take the time to learn about the students' basic writing strengths and weaknesses. Allowing the professor to begin the course at a much deeper level with a more advance approach to the subject matter would be extremely beneficial.

Additionally, in a legal research and writing program, students are immediately immersed into a personal relationship with their professor through mandatory conferences, constant feedback, and what is internalized by students as a "personal attack" on their work. Because of this, having the same professor for two years would allow students to reduce their apprehension of criticism, encourage more of a mentor-like relationship with their professors, and allow the students to see the feedback as a means to improve their skills rather than an insult. The social-emotional benefits are also critical in other skills courses, which often require students to perform simulations orally and in front of others. For many students, apprehension and fear of the reaction of a new professor or new classmates interferes with the performance of a new skill more than a lack of preparation or lack of talent. By presenting in front of the same professor and the same classmates over an extended period of time, students are likely to overcome their nerves more quickly. It is this familiarity with their professor and classmates that will encourage students to take more risks and be more engaged in the course because the strong and stable teacher-student relationship already has been formed.

Lastly, the benefit of conflict resolution that looping provides will help law students understand the importance of teamwork and the ability to work through personality conflicts. When law students go into practice, they will not get to choose the partner or supervising attorney they will work with; nor will they be able to trade that partner or supervising attorney for a different one simply because of a personality conflict. By requiring students to have the same professor over an extended period of time, students (and professors) will be resolved to work out their differences and form a partnership to work together. This aspect of conflict resolution also reinforces an important component of the third Carnegie apprenticeship, professional identity.⁵⁰ Working through conflicts in the way a practicing lawyer is required to places the student in the role of a junior associate or new lawyer. This type of

50. See SULLIVAN ET AL., *supra* note 15 at 79.

practice in a real lawyering skill provides an additional learning opportunity.

At the same time, however, some of the criticisms of looping may also be present in the law school setting. Specifically:

1. Law students tend to be conflict prone, which may exaggerate student-professor conflicts;⁵¹
2. Learning skills from only one professor will prevent students from learning to work in different ways or with different styles, as they will be forced to do in practice;
3. Professors may not want to engage in looping;⁵²
4. Looping works only when the professors are committed and capable;⁵³ and
5. Transfer students are put at a disadvantage when inserted into a looped classroom.⁵⁴

These criticisms, while valid, are all curable in the law school setting. In response to the first criticism, student-professor conflicts are bound to happen and do happen even in a non-looping setting. It is a valid criticism that student learning should not be inhibited because of an unresolvable personality conflict. As done in many elementary looping programs, provisions must be put into place to allow for students to switch professors if a conflict cannot be resolved.

The second critique is a shortcoming of looping, but it is a limited one in the law school setting. We do not recommend that all law school courses be looped, only that it may be appropriate for the required legal research and writing courses, particularly those that transcend a single year. Thus, while students in a looped course would not be exposed to other teaching styles in the legal research and writing context, they would be exposed to different teaching styles in their other courses. Furthermore, most law schools have numerous elective writing courses, clinics, extern-

51. See Jeffrey H. Goldfien, *Arguing for the Eclectic: Personality and the Legal Profession*, 10 LEWIS & CLARK L. REV. 187, 192 (2006) (reviewing SUSAN SWAIM DAICOFF, LAWYER, KNOW THYSELF: A PSYCHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF PERSONALITY STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES (2004)).

52. Cara Bafle, *In the Loop: Students and Teachers Progressing Together*, EDUCATION WORLD, Sept. 21, 2004, http://www.educationworld.com/a_admin/admin/admin120.shtml.

53. Karen Hume, *Academic Looping: Problem or Solution?*, EDUCATION CANADA, Spring 2007, at 63, 63, available at http://www.cea-ace.ca/media/en/At_Issue_Spring07.pdf.

54. Bafle, *supra* note 52.

ships, and other practical learning opportunities. Within those contexts, students would be able to see different teaching and writing styles as well as exposure to other practical skills from different teachers.

The third and fourth criticisms may be the most problematic in the law school setting and in legal research and writing programs in particular. In legal research and writing programs, which frequently are staffed with non-tenured professors or adjuncts, there may not always be equally capable professors teaching in all of the sections. If this happens, then some students will be glad they are being looped because they have the “good” professor, while others will be unhappy with looping because they are assigned to an adjunct professor or a “new” professor or the “hard” professor. To make a looping program work, each professor needs to be committed to the concept of looping as well as being a capable professor.

The last criticism, while it can occur, likely would not be a frequent problem as it only applies to transfer students. Generally speaking, the number of transfer students per school is fairly limited. While that student may be disadvantaged because she does not have a previous relationship with a particular professor, this problem is easily resolved. A program electing to using looping can make it required that a professor with a new or transfer student must work separately with that student or students to build the bond the other students already have with the professor.

In evaluating the pros and cons of looping in a law school setting, we argue that law students can benefit from the academic and social benefits of looping.

V. OUR GLOBAL LAWYERING SKILLS LOOPING STUDY: NUTS AND BOLTS

Pacific McGeorge School of Law recently began a new legal research and writing program entitled Global Lawyering Skills (GLS). This program offers students two years of required legal research, writing, and advocacy instruction. In the first year, GLS I, students are introduced to case analysis; objective and persuasive legal writing; client counseling skills, including written and verbal communications with clients; and legal research in both national and international law, including print and electronic research. In the second year, GLS II, the students receive more in-depth instruction on persuasive written and oral advocacy, including trial briefs and arguments and appellate level briefs and arguments, which culminate in a campus-wide moot court competi-

tion. It also includes further instruction in legal research, both domestic and international, as well as instruction on client-counseling, mediation, and settlement negotiation.

To ensure a coordinated program of learning, each GLS faculty member teaches one section of GLS I and one section of GLS II. This structure provides consistency from one year to the next and ensures equal education to all of our students.

As part of the development and implementation of GLS, we are evaluating how the professors should be assigned to teach in GLS. That is, should students be required to have the same professor for GLS I and GLS II, allowed to have a choice of professor, or be required to have a different professor for GLS I and GLS II?

In partnership with the University of the Pacific's Center for Teaching and Learning, we developed an empirical study to help us better determine the most effective and preferred delivery of instruction for GLS. We went through the process of gaining approval from our University Institutional Review Board so that we may study the results of a test on human subjects. We divided our thirteen sections of GLS I into three groups. The first group, which is comprised of four sections of GLS I, will be required to stay with their GLS I professor for GLS II (the "stay" group). Of these four sections, two professors have seven or more years of teaching experience, one professor has two years of teaching experience, and one professor is teaching for the first time. The second group, which is also comprised of four sections of GLS I, will be required to take different professor for GLS II than they had for GLS I (the "change" group). Of these four sections, two professors have seven or more years of teaching experience, one professor has two years of teaching experience, and one professor is teaching for the first time. The third group, which is comprised of five sections of GLS I, will be permitted to choose to take their GLS I professor for GLS II or elect take a different professor for GLS II (the "choice" group). Of these five sections, one professor has seven or more years of teaching experience, two professors have three years of teaching experience (but are adjuncts), and two professors have only one year of experience teaching this course (one of these has twenty years as a clinical professor).

At the beginning of the academic year, all students signed a consent form and completed an assessment. This same assessment form was completed again on the first day of the spring semester and will be completed again at the end of this academic year, as well as at the beginning, middle, and end of next year when they students are enrolled in GLS II.

We will use these assessments to evaluate student preferences for the three groups—stay, change, or choice. We then will compare the results of the assessments to student performance, both in GLS I and II, as well as in their overall success in law school as reflected by grades, acceptance to law review (which is a write-on competition), and participation in moot court, mock trial, clinics, and other activities. As part of this study, we also will be evaluating our GLS professors' performance; their thoughts on looping based on their assignment to a stay, change, or choice group; and their relationships with their students.

Ultimately, the goal of our study is not to prove out our thesis that looping can provide educational and social-emotional benefits to students, but simply to see what the optimal structure for students will be for GLS.

VI. HYPOTHESIS AND CONCLUSION

Our hypothesis is that looping will engender hope in law students and, ultimately, be the preferred mode of delivery for our integrated legal research and writing course, both in terms of outcomes and the feelings of students and professors. In the their article, *The Future's So Bright, I Gotta Wear Shades: Law School Through the Lens of Hope*, Professors Martin and Rand provide a recipe for engendering hope in law students.⁵⁵ As discussed above, we believe that each ingredient of their recipe for hope would be addressed by looping in a legal research and writing program.

Specifically, Martin and Rand first encourage hope in law students by helping students formulate learning rather than performance goals, formulate concrete rather than abstract goals, and formulate approach rather than avoidance goals.⁵⁶ With looping, each of these goals can be realized. By having a bond with their legal research and writing professor, students can better appreciate that the purpose of the course is not to earn a grade, but to develop a process of learning skills they will use in practice. The relationship will also create a deeper sense of accountability by both the student and the professor to ensure that they are both committed to the approach to learning and understanding rather than to avoiding difficult tasks or conflict.

55. Martin & Rand, *supra* note 1, at 218-31.

56. *Id.* at 218-23

Martin and Rand also believe hope is facilitated by modeling of the learning process and a can-do attitude.⁵⁷ This too can be encouraged through looping. By having a more long-term relationship, professors do not have any lost “get-to-know-you” time and can use that time to provide more modeling of the learning process. Furthermore, professors will become more invested in their students’ progress, thereby having a stronger can-do and encouraging attitude. Professors will want to see the growth and development of their students and will better encourage and facilitate success.

Looping may also be able to provide a solution to one of the biggest difficulties in legal research and writing programs—getting students to understand grading as feedback. By looping, students will have better context for their professor’s feedback. They will be able to see the progression of comments over a longer period of time and have better context for that feedback. It inevitably will become less about the grade and more about the feedback and opportunity to improve. Professors will become more constructive in their feedback, focusing on where students need to improve rather than what they did “wrong,” and students will have an incentive to improve in an effort to impress their professor or prove to themselves that they can improve their skills.

Lastly, looping can improve student autonomy. Because of the extended relationship between professor and students, professors can redesign their courses to allow for greater student input into the design of the course. It can become more of a group effort, allowing students to contribute to their own learning and develop their own learning goals.

While we argue that looping can engender hope, the data we have collected to date is inconclusive. Student input demonstrates that choice may be the preferred option by students. Responses suggest that many students would like to stay with their GLS professor, but they recognized that, in general, students like choice. This is consistent with numerous studies suggesting that providing opportunities for autonomy breeds hope and engagement.⁵⁸

As one student responded:

I don’t perceive there to be really any cons to allowing students to choose their GLS II professors. If they like the professor that they had for GLS I, they can elect to have that pro-

57. *Id.* at 224-25.

58. *See generally id.*; Zimmerman, *supra* note 9.

fessor again. Perhaps even a system could be worked out so that students could have first dibs on their GLS I professor, if they so choose, but if they would like to try a different professor, they can opt to have him or her instead.

On the other hand, some of the students who have been through the first year of our program and are not part of the study saw the benefit of requiring students to continue with the same professor. Focusing on the increased risk taking that occurs when a strong and stable relationship has formed, one student observed:

As you take more classes with a specific professor, you become familiar with the professor's expectations and the level of preparedness you need to succeed in his or her class. Once I have become familiar with a professor and the other students in my class, I am more willing to become an active participant in class discussions. I have realized that in the class I am currently taking with a professor that I had my first year, I am more willing to raise my hand and thrust myself into class discussions, rather than waiting to be called on.

Another student viewed the conflict resolution aspect of looping as important and explained:

In a way, being in the same section for two years in a row is a microcosm of the Sacramento legal community: You will be seeing a lot of the same judges, practitioners, and sometimes clients throughout your career simply because the local Bar is relatively small. Allowing students to choose their professor and classmates would subvert a lesson in how to get along with your colleagues for an extended period of time.

On the opposite side of the question, one student astutely identified the danger of the imprinting of one teacher's style on the class. The student cautioned: "It is incredibly beneficial and realistic for students to learn to write for multiple people. Not doing so at an early stage of legal writing is incredibly disadvantageous."⁵⁹

59. Additional Student Quotations Regarding the Looping Study concerning each of the three groupings:

Stay with a GLS Professor for Two Years:

Our faculty, too, has responded with some mixed feelings. Looping may be the preferred approach of a many, but a few are unconvinced. Initial responses demonstrate that the majority of our GLS professors like idea of having students for two years because it eliminates "get-to-know-you" time, it allows for deeper instruction, and it fosters more candid and personal conversations. There are a few professors, however, who worry about problem students and "being stuck" with them for two years.

"Learning what each professor wants from a student and their personal preferences make up half of the school battle. It could be helpful for students to stay with the same professor because they already know what their professor likes and doesn't like. It would also be good for students that are a little more shy because they are already comfortable with their professor."

"The two courses may be more cohesive because now the professor has a two-year lesson plan arc. When students return in the fall there may be more of a sense of picking up where they last left off, as opposed to having to relearn new things, or smoothing the edges where the sections may have understood things in slightly different ways."

"Second, it would allow students to build more quality and lasting relationships with professors that are important for them in terms of guidance and academic references. Generally, law schools are not very conducive to building relationships between students and professors. However, the smaller and more personal setting of the GLS I and II courses are conducive to building such relationships."

Change in GLS Professor After One Year:

"I believe that requiring students to change their professor would open students up to different teaching techniques. Students will not get too comfortable writing for the same reader and will possibly have to learn how to write for a wider audience than just one professor. Students would also get interaction with different students, instead of being "sectioned off" like they were in the first year."

"Professors have their strengths and weaknesses even in the fields they teach. Requiring students to have a different professor in GLS II would give them the opportunity to learn from the various strengths of the different professors. Furthermore, it would allow them to build relationships with multiple professors in the area of writing and research, thus giving students multiple professors to turn to for assistance."

Choice in GLS Professor After One Year:

"Different students learn differently, and students should be able to choose a professor that best suits their learning style. Further, it is not uncommon for students to pick the classes and professors that have classes that fit their schedule. Mandating a student to take the same professor may restrict a student's freedom to make his or her own schedule. Because GLS II is one of the most important classes to employers on a student's transcript, it is crucial that students have the opportunity to take the classes and professors that they think are most beneficial to them."

Ultimately, our own empirical research will allow us to objectively determine the pros and cons of looping in a law school setting and specifically in a legal research, writing, and skills course. Our intention is to publish our data and possibly expand the study to other skills programs at law schools with two-year programs like ours. Regardless of the results, we are optimistic that we will learn something important about our students and ourselves.

